

NEWS RELEASE



313 N. Figueroa Street, Room 806 • Los Angeles, CA 90012 • (213) 240-8144 • media@ph.lacounty.gov
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For Immediate Release:
July 20, 2016

For more information contact:
Public Health Communications
(213) 240-8144
media@ph.lacounty.gov

First Human Case of West Nile Virus Reported in LA County

All residents should take precautions against mosquitoes

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) confirms the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection for the 2016 season in LA County (excluding Long Beach and Pasadena as cases identified in those cities are reported by their local health departments). Illness occurred in an elderly male from the Echo Park area with no prior medical history who was hospitalized for WNV disease in late June and is recovering at home. This case has been confirmed by the California Department of Public Health.

"This serves as a warning to residents that West Nile Virus is a serious disease that may require hospitalization and can even result in death for some individuals," said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer for Los Angeles County. "Elderly persons and other people with weak immune systems are at highest risk of developing severe illness. Protect yourself from mosquitoes by using insect repellent containing an effective ingredient such as DEET, and eliminating any stagnant water around your home where mosquitoes can breed. Do it for your kids, do it for your grandkids, do it for yourself."

In 2015 in LA County, 300 human infections and 24 fatalities due to WNV were reported. Most patients were older adults who experienced serious illnesses, such as meningitis and encephalitis. For many, recovery from their illness can take a year or more with ongoing physical and mental impairment. There is no specific treatment for this disease. In most years, the first case of WNV occurs at this time of the year, and cases continue through October or early-November.

Public Health performs surveillance to identify people with WNV, and collaborates

with local vector control agencies to target areas for mosquito control activities and health education. WNV-infected mosquitoes have been identified in several areas across LA County and all county residents are encouraged to take protective action to prevent mosquito bites. Because of the recent human case, Public Health asks residents of Echo Park to be particularly diligent in using personal protection and reducing mosquito breeding sites.

"Vector control agencies in LA County cannot do it alone," said Truc Dever, General Manager for the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District. "It is imperative that the public help minimize the risk of being bitten by removing sources of water on their property that can breed mosquitoes. This is not a virus to take lightly. Additionally, residents should report dead birds, and also report sources of standing water to their local vector control agencies."

About West Nile Virus:

WNV is primarily spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito; mosquitoes can become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most mosquitoes do not carry the virus and most people bitten by a mosquito are not exposed to the virus. The virus is not spread through person-to-person contact or directly from birds to humans.

WNV illness can be very severe, causing meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, and death. Serious disease usually occurs in older adults and those with underlying medical conditions that reduce their immunity. These severe illnesses represent "the tip of the iceberg" with most infections resulting in no illness or mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and skin rash. Symptoms of WNV could appear within three to 12 days after infection.

Decrease risk of infection:

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.
- Regularly use mosquito repellents containing EPA- registered ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus, when used as labeled, are effective defenses against mosquitoes.
- Check your window screens for holes.
- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito- eating fish. These eat mosquito eggs and larvae.

- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

More information:

- For statistics on West Nile Virus in Los Angeles County, visit:
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm>
- Information on West Nile Virus by phone: (800) 232- 4636.
- Information on West Nile Virus on the web: <http://westnile.ca.gov/>

Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:

- Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656
- Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370
- San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466
- Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917
- Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 933- 5321
- Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004
- City of Long Beach Health and Human Services: (562) 570-4132

Report dead birds online at www.westnile.ca.gov/report_wnv.php or call (877) 968-2473. Stagnant swimming pools or "green pools" should be reported to the Public Health's Environmental Health Division at (888) 700-9995, or to a local vector control agency.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov, visit our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/lapublichealth, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lapublichealth, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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